Middlebury College March 23rd 1827

My Dear Sister,

You may, at this time think that I have entirely forgotten you; that I do not remember you as a friend, much less as a beloved sister. But Maria this is not the case. I do regard you with a brothers love, & feel that my attachment to you is strong. I was glad to hear from you in the winter, & to learn that you were so pleasantly situated, also that you were then making such improvements. The studies to which you have attended are just such as I should wish. If you have a thorough knowledge of these, you have been a studious; which I am happy to learn from your instructor has been the case. He has given me a very favorable account of you as a scholar. But do not think, my sister, because you have brushed your apron against the walls of an academy, that you are a great I: & that those who have not enjoyed these advantages are little w. It is the case in many instances that three months schooling at an academy is sufficient to shield a young lady, and render them mere objects of disgust. It gives them an affected, unmeaning appearance, alters the whole character, fills them with pride, & makes them ridiculous. The lady, who but twelve months ago wore a pleasant, modest countenance, whose cheeks were often tinged with a commendable, and well meaning blush, now wears a front of brass, the cannon roar in the face with the boldness of a lion. Once she had a graceful gait, walked and moved as other people; but now her joints are stiff, as ~~stakes~~ stakes, her arms swing like posters, her head turns, as though it was a ball of stone, and rested upon iron shoulders. It would not require much reasoning to prove that this same head is pumpkin, and her mind a pipkin. Others carry away with them academick dignities, if not so glaring, still are discoverable, and are abominable by good sense.

Your own observation may teach you much on this point, & will be far better than any thing that I can say. I wish you not to be satisfied with what you have now acquired, as though there was no more to be learned. There are a thousand young ladies who know much more than yourself, still are very ignorant. [illegible] to make constant improvement [illegible] your attent[illegible]

you will reap great benefit. I want you to pay much attention to your Philosophy. You may put it in practice every day. You may Philosophise over your dishwater, and with your broomhandle & thus be constantly improving. — My Dear Sister I love you, nor can I close my letter without giving you evidence of it. My regard for your temporal prosperity is great. I want to see you an ornament to society, & respected and beloved by all who know you. But I do long for, oh I cannot be denied the satisfaction of seeing you a devoted Christian. How long, my Dear Maria, shall your brothers and sister meet in secret places on your account? How long shall a mother's heart bleed for the salvation of a beloved child. Oh could our tears wash away your guilt, we would ~~rescue~~ save your soul from eternal despair. There is sympathy in your heart. You would save us our pain. But you will not repent. I love you, when I tell you, that you are most unkind. To treat your nearest and dearest friends in such a manner is hard, but to treat a Saviour thus, is cruel. You are making work for heart rending agony. If there was no day of death, — if there was no hell I would not say so. If there was no day of judgement, no Heaven to loose, I would withhold so unwelcome a truth. But I feel that there is a God, a Heaven, and a world of unutterable woe, & that our lives here must and will decide our destiny. When I think of you living without hope & without God in the world, and the season of youth so rapidly passing away with you, it gives me feelings that I cannot express. I must tell you your steps take hold on hell. But when I do this I will point you to the Lamb of God whose blood is sufficient and alone sufficient to cleanse your polluted soul & fit you for Heaven. I doubt not but that your convinced of these solemn truths. I doubt not but that you have some serious thoughts, and sometimes a sort of desire that you was a Christian. But I want to ask you one question; have you ever resolved that you would seek the Lord till you obtained pardoning mercy; that if you perished you would perish humbly praying. God be merciful to me a sinner? Now however you may desire to be a child of God, However much you may read your bible, however frequently you may enter your closet with the words of prayer upon your lips, without a settled, unshaken resolution

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that you will return to your Heavenly Father [illegible] will be vain. Maria read the parable of the prodigal Son, Luke 15 I say not only read it, but dwell upon it, think of it when you lie down, when you rise up. Feed no longer upon husks, but arise, go, with his confession & the Saviour will meet you receive you, and bless you. Now my dear Sister, will you I say will you, or will you not? Stop one moment before you decide. Remember that God is looking right upon your heart, & that the decision you now make will be recorded in heaven, & that you must meet it at the judgement day. — I must close. It is my hearts desire and prayer to God that you may not lay down in sorrow.

Your affectionate brother S. B. Preston —

My dear Mother, I am as ready to write you a few lines, as you are willing to have me. I received your motherly letter in time of need, my friends thought that I was homesick. I told them, if wanting to see mother was homesick they were right. I thought of you much the winter past, & have seen many evenings, when my joy would have been full [illegible] I have spent them by mothers side. Not because I had not f[illegible] around me, I have spent the winter very pleasantly, though my task has been very laborious. My health has held out beyond my expectations, and is now good. You want to know whether I am dead or alive. At such a time as this a hypocrite may live. It seems that the very air we breath, the very dust upon which we tread was holy. The Lord is rending the very Heavens and coming down not in wrath but in great mercy. The Saviour is seeing of the travel of his soul. I tremble & I rejoice. We hope and believe Midd— & college are about to be visited by the Spirit of God. Ah, it is visited, two recent conversions have taken place in the village, Christians are melting down & such an agonizing Spirit of prayer, I have rarely if ever witnessed. They will prevail with God. He will hear his children who cry day and night with him. In college things wear a solemn aspect. The breathren are coming up to the help of the Lord, with the resolution that they will be on the Lords side. Such meetings as we now have are heavenly seasons. But we are not yet at the foot of our [illegible] must be before we receive a bless[illegible]

[illegible] your absent

I have heard that they are dissatisfied with me respecting the dismissal of Chandler, I cannot take the blame to such as, but this is folly, & I could convince them of it at once. I wish them not to charge their own neglect to my account. S.B.P.

season of [illegible]

prayer in college, We feel that there are yet no two who feel as they must feel before the blessing comes down. I do believe the exercises of this day will be blessed. I feel that God is lovely. For a few days I have felt to love him, because he is a perfectly holy Being, His purity has been an object of my attention and admiration for some days past. I think I have enjoyed sweet communion with my saviour, but to day has been a solemn season When I have endeavoured to examine my heart, I have discovered such a fountain of iniquity boiling in my bosom that I can not but exclaim unclean unclean, If I am a christian I am a wonder of mysterious grace. I wish, my Mother that you might before you go down to the grave enjoy & witness a revival.

Give my respects to all, I want much to see you all but cannot tell when I shall enjoy the privilege.

G H P

[illegible] Sheldon is [illegible]

Miss Maria H. Preston
Rupert
Vt

Br. [illegible]
March 1827

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